



UNCLE ELI'S WEDDING

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Daniel loves his Uncle Eli. But will Uncle Eli have as much time for him now that he's getting married to Lilah? Uncle Eli promises Daniel something special on the wedding day.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Marriage has always been central to Jewish life. As the basis of the Jewish family, it is, in turn, the cornerstone of the Jewish community. In the first book of the Torah, God announced, "It is not good for man to be alone" [Genesis 2:18]. Today, few occasions are more joyous than a Jewish wedding. As we see in *Uncle Eli's Wedding*, Jewish wedding rituals are filled with symbolism and rich traditions:

On the day of the wedding, a marriage contract (in Hebrew, a *ketubah*) is signed. Whether the wording of the *ketubah* is traditional or updated, this document is usually beautifully decorated -- often with calligraphy and hand-painting -- and many couples display it in their home.

A *chuppah* (marriage canopy) symbolizes the home the couple will share. The canopy itself is often a keepsake -- the *tallit* (prayer shawl) of a loved one, for example, or a quilt made by family and friends. The *chuppah* is open on all sides to symbolize the value of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests into the home.

Perhaps the most recognizable hallmark of a Jewish wedding happens at the instant when the groom breaks a glass underfoot. For some, this may symbolize the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem, or it can serve to remind the couple to remain steadfast during challenging times. In any case, it is a dramatic moment that prompts everyone to shout "Mazel Tov" (Congratulations)!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In this story, Daniel was frustrated that he couldn't get Uncle Eli's full attention. Uncle Eli was a little distracted by his wedding preparations! But Daniel ended up having fun anyway, as a Jewish wedding is a very festive event. If your family is invited to a wedding, help make the occasion extra special for your child.

Talk with your child about what will take place. Jewish weddings often involve a lot of elements that children may not understand, especially if part of the ceremony is in Hebrew. Reading books like *Uncle Eli's Wedding* can help familiarize children with the basics so that they know what to expect.

Take a quiet book or sketchpad for fidgeters. Though much of the wedding may be of interest to youngsters, it's always smart to have something at the ready to keep antsy little ones quiet and engaged during the ceremony.

Teach your child the *horah*. After the wedding, it is common for guests to dance the *horah* (a traditional Eastern European circle dance), often to the song "Hava Nagila," lifting the bride and groom high in the air on chairs. The steps are simple and fun -- look for directions online. *Mazel tov!*